North" of *Blackwood's Magazine*, the inauguration of which we mentioned a short time ago. We have since seen the marble in Paisley, and bear willing testimony to its merit: it is unquestionably a work of genius.*

More anon.

THE EDUCATION OF ARTISTS AND VALUE OF THE OLD MASTERS.

Sir,—The observations of your correspondent "Amateur" on the three papers entitled "The Influences which tend to retard the Progress of the Fine Arts" do not appear to rise to the value of objections. In several instances he endeavours to divide

"A hair 'twixt south and south-west side;"

but as his letter affords an opportunity in reply of advocating the cause in which we have enlisted, advantage is taken of it. No objectors having arisen on the part of those in earnest with the profession we interpret as a tacit approval of the motives of the essay; it is feared, however, that the intention of making each portion of it logically dependent on its antecedent was unfulfilled from inability at present to do more than lisp our thoughts.

You cannot suppose, Sir, for a moment, that we ever intended to deny the power of ancient artists. The great question is this: how are men to arrive at equal or greater excellence? It is of little use telling them of "the lofty genius of Raffaelle," "not to be servile copyists," and "to select the best parts from the best things;" we endeavour to do more than this, enforcing the study of nature—the whole range of science—as the most effective course for discovering and destroying all fallacies—for the perception of truth. Again, that artistic studies should be extended over a wider field than at present, in order to bring all the rays of the light of knowledge to a focus on our pursuits,—this we conceive to be the true way of enabling men to discern what is right: are they likely to remain servile if such a course of study be pursued? Eminence—freedom—the power of discriminating—"the selecting the best parts from the best things" of your correspondent—will these not all be attained by diligently studying nature? By "studying nature" we do not mean merely painting nor drawing from objects animate or inanimate, although this is too often its limited signification with the artist. Does not nature include both the perceiving and perceived? If so, there could never be any doubt in our mind that the knowledge of both is essential to the understanding of either; but we fear the real cause of almost all the evils in art is this—*that falsely magnifying and extolling the powers of the mind*, we seek not its real helps. "Man, the minister and interpreter of nature, can act and understand in as far as he has either in fact or in thought observed the order of nature: more he can neither know nor do."

If "Amateur" reads attentively, he will find that the admission with regard "to the faithfulness of endeavour, &c." exhibited in the works of the early Christian painters, which he assumes to negative, are in fact powerful arguments of Schelling on the futility of copying ancient art, for says he, "before them also stood the works of antiquity—round statues and bas-reliefs, which they might have directly transferred to their pictures; but this appropriation of a beauty not earned by itself, satisfies not an instinct of art, which tends directly *to the original, and from this in freedom and primal energy developes for itself the beautiful*," as it were, "from the very seed and root." That is, ancient art was in its results before them, but they foresaw that the blind worship of it would not lead to excellence—they inferred no doubt, that all ages could not have had a collection of old masters as precedents, therefore resolved to enter the school of nature, first learning to lisp and spell. This humility bore its fruits in aftertime, enabling their descendants to read and understand through the accumulation of experience by tradition. We know not whether they may have made the deductions which we subjoin from the history of art, which in our own time are rendered more conclusive by being confirmed by the history of their epoch:—

1st. That "the divine geniuses," "the great names in art," were never coeval with the first demands on art-production.

2nd. That the highest excellence in both Greek and Italian art, *was only attained progressively*.

3rd. Those honoured as the greatest artists were of this period.

4th. That in both the Grecian and Italian epochs the earliest efforts had their types in a foreign and more ancient art—the one Asiatic and Egyptian, the other Grecian.

5th. That Greek and Italian art was neither vital nor progressive till emancipated from the yoke of precedent.

All these must powerfully militate against the 'revival' mania, and may teach us also to honour all earnest labourers with an equal regard, whether they lay the hidden and secure foundations, which are essential to the support of the beautiful superstructure, or the coping stone of the edifice. The custom is to pay all honor to the latter, forgetting that every man is raised and built up by the labours of his predecessors; and when we reflect on the slow advance of the arts and sciences, we must inevitably come to the conclusion that "divine genius" has little to boast of as inherent or self attained: much more is due to the labours of others, but most to the conjunction of favourable circumstances.

As for old pictures, we regard them as the fading leaves in autumn: compelled by the preparations for a future growth, they fall, enriching the soil in decay, obeying that eternal oscillation, 'twixt life and death, which pervades nature. The beautiful lilies pass away,—the rose, all that is fair, must shrivel into uncomeliness and die,—and who could observe these without wonder, imbued with an inner conviction that the greatest work of human art is insignificant in comparison. Why, then, should not the flowers of civilization, so inferior in skill, pass away with the season in which they possessed the freshness, bloom, and fragrance of life?

Need we call attention to the condition of philosophy before the time of Bacon, when the dogmas of the schools were absolute, as a parallel to the present unhealthy exhumation of rottenness, of rust—of all that bears upon it either the ghastliness of absolute death, or on which is cast the dark shades of its approach? He indeed was thoroughly opposed to antiquity, and was the first to expose the fallacy of a supposed debt of reverence, pointing out the true path of science: the results have been astronomy and chemistry, instead of astrology and alchemy. "The opinion which men entertain of antiquity is a very idle thing," said he, "and almost incongruous to the word, for the old age and length of days of the world should, in reality, be accounted antiquity, and ought to be attributed to our own times, not to the youth of the world, which it enjoyed amongst the ancients; for that age, though with respect to us it be ancient and greater, yet with regard to the world it was new and less."

Burke, with similar convictions, writes—"And as for those so-called critics, they have sought the rules of the arts in the wrong place; they sought it among poems, pictures, engravings, statues, and buildings, *but art can never give the rules that make an art*." "This is, I believe, the reason why artists in general, and poets principally, have been confined in so narrow a circle: they have been rather imitators of one another than of nature, and this with so faithful an uniformity, and so remote an antiquity, that it is hard to say who gave the first model. Critics follow them, and therefore can do little as guides. I can judge but poorly of anything whilst I measure it by no other standard than itself: the true standard of the arts is in every man's power, and an easy observation of the commonest, sometimes of the meanest, things in nature will give the truest lights."

Retrogressists must yield before such bulwarks—progressists must ultimately triumph.

There is one other point on which your correspondent made the following remarks:—"I am one of those old-fashioned individuals who think that money alone will not create a taste for the fine arts, and with all respect for political economy in its proper sphere, venture to doubt whether there may not be exceptions, in the fine arts at least, to this fundamental maxim, that the best article will always fetch the best price!" and, again, "what all would desire is, that patronage should flow in the purest stream and right direction."

Money alone will certainly not create a taste, and as certainly will no taste be created unless money be expended: how then would it be best to disburse some of the hundreds of thousands now chiefly devoted to the purchase of old masters? If the possession of these would make artists, and educate the public, then indeed is England highly favoured: we hope, however, that all who have influence will exhort patrons to change their favour to the works of men of their own time, to give them ample scope for the exercise of their talents, by having their mansions decorated. By such encouragement munificent patrons, private and ecclesiastical, developed the artists of past times, instead of allowing walls to be covered, as oftentimes they are in England, with dingy rubbish.

We wonder that architects have allowed so long the features of their interior designs to be so marred.

There would be no fear of patronage "flowing in the purest stream and right direction," if patrons of whatever class knew what the right thing should be; but this is far from being the case. In our essay means were suggested of improving public taste, by a better and more generally diffused art-education in the schools and colleges of the realm. This would be an opening for a wise appropriation of funds; but even in the present state of things there is nothing to controvert the maxim that the best of the article demanded will fetch the best price. That which the educated few call the best is so because they are habituated and trained to appreciate it, but this is "*cariare*" to others whose best is of another standard; but every one assuredly gives the best price for the best of that which he esteems.

It would strike us as both unreasonable and tyrannical, if any body of men should resolve to force others weaker than themselves, who might prefer black, to purchase and swallow white bread (change in tastes are only gradually effected), yet this is very like the course pursued by those who fancy they have the power of transforming the people's by the touch, as it were, of the magic wand—their veto.

The greatest care ought to be observed lest in meddling obstructions be thrown in its way: while society is in a healthy condition it must be progressive. Let every one be ready to supply oil to the wheels of the advancing chariot.

W. C. Thomas.

Health of Towns.—At Hull, Sunderland, Hartlepool, Newport, Droitwich, Cheltenham, Taunton, Witham, and elsewhere, steps are being taken for the extension of the provisions of the Health Bill to the respective localities. We have already noted the like commendable proceeding with regard to Whitehaven, Portsea, Bedford, Gateshead, Cambridge, Ely, Worcester, Birmingham, &c.; so that the Act seems to be desired and appreciated in all quarters. At Bristol a determination has been expressed zealously to second the directions of the Board of Health, but the citizens have yet to express their opinion of the Health Bill as applicable to Bristol. Dr. Southwood Smith has been appointed the Medical Member of the General Board of Health.

A Greek Church at London Wall is in course of erection, there being a sufficient number, it appears, of Greeks, or members of the Greek church, now resident in London, not only to build, but to occupy such an edifice.

* The following sonnet on this bust we take from a charming little volume of "Sonnets," by Mr. Andrew Park, the poet, of Glasgow, published by Murray of that city, and Bogue of Fleet-street, 1848:—

"How like a lion in quiescent might,
The noble soul'd "old Christopher" appears!
The mental glory of internal light
Smiles beautiful amid his ripening years!
No petty meanness—no flesh-shapen fears
O'errast the manly firmness of his face,—
His brow, a dome of thought—majestic rears,—
His eye, a thousand fancies seems to trace!
His flowing locks swim o'er a neck of grace,
And all the aspect of his form is pow'r!
A manliness that time cannot displace,
Fresh and unbending as in youth's gay hour.
The heathens had their gods, so Scotland, thou
Mayst trace as proud a form in living Wilson now."

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